DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 036 245 HE 000 877

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TITLE PERCEPTIONS OF HOFSTRA BY FRESHMEN IN ATTENDANCE.
INSTITUTION HOFSTRA UNIV., HEMPSTEAD, N.Y. CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION.
REPORT NO R-79
PUB DATE APR 69
NOTE 14P.
AVAILABLE FROM CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY, HEMPSTEAD, NEW YORK

EDRS PRICE EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.80
DESCRIPTORS ABLE STUDENTS, *COLLEGE ATTENDANCE, *COLLEGE CHOICE, FINANCIAL SUPPORT, *FRESHMEN, *HIGHER EDUCATION, *STUDENT MOTIVATION, SUPERIOR STUDENTS
IDENTIFIERS *HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

THIS STUDY WAS UNDERTAKEN TO DETERMINE WHY STUDENTS CAME TO HOFSTRA, AND TO COMPARE THEIR REASONS WITH THOSE OF STUDENTS WHO WERE ACCEPTED BUT CHOSE NOT TO ATTEND. A QUESTIONNAIRE WAS SENT TO 856 FRESHMEN ENTERING HOFSTRA IN 1966, ASKING THEM TO LIST THEIR REASONS FOR ATTENDING HOFSTRA, LIST THE COLLEGES WHICH ACCEPTED THEM IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE, AND PROVIDE SOME BACKGROUND ACHIEVEMENT DATA. 535 STUDENTS OR 62% RESPONDED. THE REASONS MOST FREQUENTLY LISTED FOR ATTENDING HOFSTRA WERE LOCATION, ACADEMIC PROGRAM, AND FINANCIAL FACTORS. THE ACADEMICALLY SUPERIOR STUDENT CITED FINANCIAL REASONS MORE FREQUENTLY, WHILE THE POORER STUDENT WAS MORE INFLUENCED BY ACADEMIC REASONS. BETTER STUDENTS WHO PERCEIVED HOFSTRA LESS FAVORABLY, AND THOSE FOR WHOM HOFSTRA WAS NOT FIRST CHOICE WERE MORE LIKELY TO BE INFLUENCED BY FINANCIAL REASONS. . THOSE WHO MADE HOFSTRA FIRST CHOICE WERE MORE INFLUENCED BY ACADEMIC REASONS. RESULTS INDICATE THAT IN ORDER TO ATTRACT BETTER STUDENTS, HOFSTRA MUST CONTINUE TO IMPROVE ITS ACADEMIC REPUTATION AND THE QUALITY OF ITS PROGRAMS, AND MAKE MORE FINANCIAL AID AVAILABLE. (AF)

ED036245

Report No. 79
April 1969

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY

Perceptions of Hofstra by Freshmen in Attendance

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Summary and Conclusions

A previous study described perceptions of Hofstra and reasons for non-attendance of applicants who had been accepted for Fall 1966 admission to the University, but had chosen not to attend. A report of these findings is contained in CSHE Report No. 68, March 1968, Perceptions of Hofstra by Accepted Applicants Who Did Not Attend. The present study was undertaken to determine why students came to Hofstra, and to compare their reasons with those of students who were accepted for admission but chose not to attend.

The population studied consisted of the 856 freshmen who had entered Hofstra in September 1966. Completed questionnaires were returned by 535 students, or 62% of this population. A one-page questionnaire was used, on which the student was asked to list his reasons for attending Hofstra, the colleges which accepted him in order of preference, and some background achievement data.

The reason for attending Hofstra that was most frequently listed was location, cited by 75% of the respondents, academic program was second (listed by 61%) and financial factors were third (listed by 29%). Advice of others, the college climate, and the physical attributes of the campus were of minor importance.

When the responses were analyzed in terms of subgroups of the sample, it was found that the academically better students cited financial reasons more frequently, while poorer students were more influenced by academic reasons. Better students who perceived Hofstra less favorably academically were more likely to be influenced by a financial incentive.

There was a tendency for financial reasons to be cited more by those who listed Hofstra as other than their first choice, and for academic reasons to be cited more frequently by those citing Hofstra as

HE000 877

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their first choice. Thus, students who viewed Hofstra less favorably apparently could be influenced to attend by financial reasons.

A comparison of attenders and non-attenders indicated that both groups of students were influenced by the same factors in their decision to attend Hofstra. Location was the reason most frequently listed by all students, and large percentages of each group listed academic and financial factors as important.

Although these three factors were cited most frequently by both groups, there were distinguishing characteristics for attenders and non-attenders within each category. Attenders who cited location most frequently specified that Hofstra was close to home, whereas non-attenders stated that they did not attend Hofstra for this reason. Most of the attenders listing academic factors noted that Hofstra had a good program, whereas many of the non-attenders stated that the program at another school was preferable to Hofstra's. Attenders listing financial aspects most frequently stated that availability of financial aid was important in their decision, while non-attenders listing this category cited the inadequacy of aid or the preferability of tuition-free schools.

The major conclusion in this report is similar to that derived from the previous study of non-attenders. In order to attract better students to Hofstra, there must be a continued improvement of its academic reputation and quality of programs, and greater availability of financial aid.

(Copies of the full report are available from the Center for the Study of Higher Education)

Introduction

In 1967 those applicants who had been accepted for Fall 1966 admission to Hofstra, but chose not to attend, were queried regarding their perceptions of the University and their reasons for not attending. Their reactions were described in CSHE Report No. 68, March 1968, Perceptions of Hofstra by Accepted Applicants Who Did Not Attend. In order to achieve a perspective regarding the factors influencing an applicant's decision to attend Hofstra, a second study was initiated of those students who had been accepted and had come to Hofstra. Do their perceptions of Hofstra differ from those of applicants who had been accepted for admission but had chosen not to attend? The present report presents the results of this study.

The purposes of the present report are two-fold: 1) to examine the reasons for attending listed by applicants who chose to enroll at Hofstra, and 2) to compare these reasons with those given by applicants who were accepted for admission during the same period but chose not to attend the University.

During the week of May 1-5, 1967, a one-page questionnaire was distributed to freshmen who had entered Hofstra during the Fall semester of 1966. The questionnaires were distributed to all sections of English 2 and English 3. A total of 535 questionnaires were returned. This represented 62% of the 856 freshmen who had entered Hofstra in September 1966.

The respondent was asked to list the major reasons which influenced his decision to attend Hofstra. This open-ended format was used to obtain the reasons most salient to the respondent. The reasons were coded by this office and grouped into categories and subcategories. Each student was also requested to: 1) list the colleges that had accepted him in order of his preference; 2) list his scores on various high school achievement measures, i.e., SAT math and verbal scores, high school decile and high school average; and 3) rate Hofstra on a five-point scale ranging from "very hard school" to "very easy school."

Reasons for Attending Hofstra

Of the 535 freshmen who returned the questionnaire, 531 gave a total of 1,203 discrete responses for choosing Hofstra, an average of 2.3 reasons per respondent.

Table 1 presents reasons for attending Hofstra giving the number and percentage of freshmen responding to each of the major categories. In this table, total frequency (N) does not add up to the total respondents of 531 since most students gave responses which could be coded in more

Table 1

Major Reasons Cited for Attending Hofstra

Categories of Responses	N	Percent (of 531)
Location	398	75
Academic program	322	61
Financial	153	29
Advice of others	71	13
Collegiate climate	49	9
Physical characteristics	37	7
Other	131	25

than one of these categories. Percentages are based on the total sample of 531, in order to provide an indication of the percent of students citing each type of reason.

Location. From Table 1 it can be seen that location was the most frequently mentioned category for attending Hofstra, listed by 75% (398) of the sample. Examination of the responses within this category shows that 59% of all respondents mentioned reasons that could be grouped in the subcategory "convenient location." Most typical of these responses were that Hofstra was "close to home" and "within commuting distance." An additional 7% of the respondents cited Hofstra's general geographic location, e.g., "The campus is close to New York." Three percent indicated that they chose Hofstra because they preferred to be away from home. (It should be noted that at the time of this study Hofstra did not have extensive dormitory facilities.)

Academic program. Sixty-one percent (322) of the students indicated that they had chosen Hofstra because of some aspect of its academic program. The greatest percentage of respondents (24%) stated that Hofstra had a "good academic program" without reference to any particular department or program. A specific curriculum was cited by 21% of the respondents. Departments or programs mentioned by ten or more respondents were: Drama and Speech (31), School of Business (13), School of Education (12), and the Psychology Department (12). Eighteen other

departments were mentioned by at least one, but not more than six respondents. Twelve students indicated that the program they were interested in was available only at Hofstra. Areas specifically cited by the students included computer technology, business communications, and industrial engineering.

Seventeen percent of the respondents commented that Hofstra's reputation, or "growing reputation" was an important reason for attending. Representative statements included: "Hofstra has a good academic rating," and "The school is gaining a fine reputation." A small percentage (3%) indicated that they chose Hofstra because they perceived it as an academically "easy" school. Two percent of the respondents indicated that their decision had been influenced by the quality of Hofstra's faculty.

Financial. Financial reasons for attending Hofstra were listed by twenty-nine percent (153) of the respondents. Twenty-two percent stated that they received some form of financial aid for attending. Typical responses were: "I won a full tuition scholarship," or "Hofstra gave me a grant-in-aid." The remaining students in this category gave miscellaneous financial reasons for attending, e.g., "It was less expensive than my alternative school."

Advice of others. Thirteen percent (71) of the students were influenced by others in their decision to attend Hofstra. The most frequently mentioned source of influence was friends and/or relatives that had previously attended, or are presently attending Hofstra (6%). Other sources of influence included the respondent's parents (2%), and their high school counselors (2%). Apparently, the advice of others is not an important factor.

Collegiate climate. Less than 10% (49) of the respondents stated that they came to Hofstra because of the campus activities, the characteristics of the student body, or a promising social life.

Physical characteristics. Seven percent (37) of the respondents indicated that Hofstra's general appearance (i.e., dorms, library, and other facilities) was a major factor in their decision to attend.

Other. A comparatively moderate number of students (131, or 25%) listed reasons for attending Hofstra that could not be classified into the major categories presented in Table 1. Such reasons included: "Hofstra was my first preference," "small enough to allow some personal attention," "the only school that accepted me," and "It has no religious affiliation."

Characteristics of Attenders

Achievement variables. Self-reports of decile standing in high school class, high school average, and verbal and mathematical reasoning scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) were obtained from all respondents. Each of these variables was cross-tabulated with the major categories of location, academic and financial reasons for attending Hofstra to determine if the importance of these factors for the various subgroups was the same as for the entire sample. There was a relationship ($X^2 = 35.01$, $p < .001$) between SAT verbal scores and reasons for attending, as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2

Major Reasons for Attendance Related to Verbal SAT Scores

Verbal SAT Scores	N	Academic (percent)	Financial (percent)	Location (percent)
600 - 799	140	40	52	73
500 - 599	235	61	23	71
350 - 499	36	67	14	83

These data indicate that location was the most frequently cited reason for attending Hofstra for all groups, with no major differences between high to low scorers. On the other hand, academic and financial aspects were of differential importance to high, medium and low scorers: 1) Low verbal SAT scorers (below 500) listed academic reasons for attending more frequently than those with scores of 600 or above (67% vs. 40%; $t = 2.87$, $p < .01$). 2) Financial factors were cited more frequently as a major reason for attending by students with high SAT verbal scores (600 or above) than those with scores below 500 (52% vs. 14%; $t = 4.12$, $p < .01$). These two trends seem to complement each other. Those students who perceived Hofstra as desirable (academically) are not as influenced by financial incentives as students who perceived Hofstra as less desirable.

The relationships between reasons for attending and high school average, SAT mathematics scores and high school decile are consistent with those reported above for SAT verbal scores and may be found in Tables 6 through 8 of the Appendix. All of these relationships were statistically significant. These data indicate that: 1) Location is the most important influence for all students. 2) Students with good academic performance cite financial reasons for attending. 3) Poor performers cite academic factors.

Reasons related to preference. Students listed the colleges to which they had been accepted in order of their preference. Of the 520 respondents who indicated their preferences, 72% cited Hofstra as their first preference, 22% as their second preference, 5% as their third, and 2% as their fourth preference. Table 3 presents these groups with the percentage of respondents who gave location, financial, or academic reasons for attendance. Because of the small number of students citing

Table 3

Reasons Related to Preference

	N	Academic (percent)	Financial (percent)	Location (percent)
Hofstra 1st preference	375	60	23	79
Hofstra 2nd-4th preference	145	42	48	63

Hofstra as third or fourth preference, these have been combined with those giving Hofstra as their second preference. This relationship between reasons and preference for Hofstra is statistically significant ($X^2 = 32.48$, $p < .001$).

To those students who listed Hofstra University as a first preference, academic reasons and location were most important, with financial reasons less important. To those who listed Hofstra as other than first choice, financial reasons were much more important, being cited by almost half (48%) of the students. Differences in the proportions of students citing each type of reason were significant (academic, $t = 3.57$; financial, $t = 5.72$; location, $t = 3.64$; all $p < .01$). Financial aid apparently does succeed in bringing to Hofstra students who would rather go somewhere else. What their reactions are when they get here, and whether or not they stay at Hofstra are questions warranting further investigation.

Comparison of Attenders and Non-Attenders

A. Major Reasons Influencing Attendance

An examination of the factors which influence an accepted applicant's decision to attend a University suggest that there is considerable agreement on the factors which applicants consider important, regardless of whether the student chooses to attend or not. Table 4 indicates that when responding to an open-ended format, location was the

Table 4

Reasons Influencing Decision to Attend or Not to Attend Hofstra

	Attenders percent (N = 531)	Non-Attenders (percent) (N = 331)
Location	75	56
Academic Program	61	44
Financial Aspects	29	44

Note.--Data on non-attenders is reproduced from CSHE Report No. 68, March 1968: Perceptions of Hofstra By Accepted Applicants Who Did Not Attend.

most frequently cited reason influencing an applicant's decision to attend or not to attend Hofstra. In addition, large percentages of attenders and non-attenders stated that academic and financial factors were of considerable importance. There was no other aspect of Hofstra listed as important in the decision to attend by more than 14% of either group.

Although the above three factors were of importance to both groups, an analysis of the specific reasons within categories reveals the particular distinguishing characteristics of attenders and non-attenders. For example, almost three-fifths of the attenders specified that Hofstra was "close to home," whereas almost one-third of the non-attenders stated that they did not attend Hofstra for this reason.

Academic aspects of Hofstra were also perceived differently by attenders and non-attenders. Twenty-four percent of the attenders noted that Hofstra had a "good" or an "adequate" academic program, with 21% citing a specific program or curriculum as a major reason for their attendance. Conversely, 18% of the non-attenders responding to this category said that a specific program at another school was preferable to Hofstra's. In addition, 3% noted that they intended to major in fields not offered at Hofstra.

For a substantial number of applicants, attendance at Hofstra was conditional upon receiving some form of financial aid. Of the attenders, 22% noted that financial aid was a major factor in their decision to attend. For non-attenders, the reasons most often cited in this category were "inadequate financial aid" and the "availability of tuition free schools."

B. Perception of Hofstra University

Both groups of students were asked to rate Hofstra on a five-point continuum from "very hard" to "very easy." Since less than 1% of both attenders and non-attenders rated Hofstra as either "very hard" or "very easy," the "very hard" and "hard" categories as well as the "very easy" and "easy" categories were combined. A comparison of these ratings for attenders and non-attenders yielded significant differences ($X^2 = 15.82$, $p<.01$). A slightly larger percent of the non-attenders viewed Hofstra as an easy school; only 5% of the attenders rated Hofstra as easy, compared with 10% of the non-attenders ($t = 2.41$, $p<.05$). The greatest percent in each group, 68% for attenders and 57% for non-attenders, saw Hofstra as a school of average difficulty.

Another difference between the two groups arises when comparing the ratings of Hofstra in terms of the students' preferences for Hofstra (i.e., 1st through 4th choice). Of the non-attenders who had rated Hofstra as easy, none had chosen it as a first preference, 35% as second preference, and 65% as third or fourth preference. This trend was reversed for non-attenders who perceived Hofstra as a hard school; a majority of these students listed Hofstra as their first or second choice. This data was presented in the CSHE report on non-attenders as supportive of the hypothesis that college applicants tend to place at the top of their lists schools to which they aspire, but which are perceived as being difficult to gain admission to. Choices further down on their list represent schools perceived as having lower academic standards and therefore easier to get into, i.e., a "safe" choice.

Results obtained from those students who attended Hofstra were different from the above results for non-attenders. Of those who had rated Hofstra as an easy school, a majority (72%) had chosen it as first choice, 17% as second choice, and 10% as third or fourth choice. A similar trend was shown by those who saw Hofstra as a hard school, i.e., the majority of these students (78%) selected Hofstra as first choice. The results obtained for the attenders may have been influenced by their experience at Hofstra. In addition, it is possible that preferences for schools may have changed after the student had been accepted into a school. For example, a student may have initially considered Hofstra to be his third or fourth choice. After being in attendance at Hofstra, however, he may have experienced cognitive dissonance, and listed Hofstra as having been his first choice. In Table 9 of the Appendix, an index of the relative desirability of the various colleges is presented for attenders and non-attenders.

C. Reasons Related to Achievement

It was previously noted (cf. p. 7) that attenders who were better students (e.g., high SAT scores) cited financial reasons for

attending more frequently (52%) and academic reasons less frequently (40%). This trend was reversed for the non-attenders; better students cited academic reasons more frequently (51%) and financial reasons less frequently (35%) as their reasons for non-attendance. Thus it appears that the better students are drawn to Hofstra more by financial than academic motivations, whereas those who do not attend state that academic motivation predominates. This, of course, must be considered in light of the previously discussed differences in these major categories for attenders and non-attenders. Finally, neither of these two reasons were as important in the students' decision as the location factor.

Table 5

Subcategories of Reasons for Attending Hofstra

	Percent of Respondents (N = 531)
LOCATION	
Convenient location	59
Preferred location (geographic)	7
Preferred away from home	3
Miscellaneous	6
ACADEMIC	
Quality of undergraduate program	24
Specific program or curriculum	21
Prestige and reputation	17
Easy program	3
Program available only at Hofstra	2
Quality of faculty	2
FINANCIAL	
Received financial aid	22
Other	7
ADVICE OF OTHERS	
Friend or relative attending or attended	6
Parental	2
High school counselor or teacher	2
Others (includes "highly recommended" without stating source)	5
COLLEGIATE CLIMATE	
Atmosphere	5
Student body	2
Social life	2
Athletics	2
PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS	
Facilities, dorms, general appearance	6
Other	1
OTHER	
Hofstra was first preference	4
Size related aspects	4
Administrative procedures	3
Only school of acceptance	2
Visit to campus	1
Compulsory ROTC	1
No religious affiliation	1
Miscellaneous	9

Note.--Subtotals of major categories may not add up to the totals of categories in Table 1 because a respondent could have made more than one response per major category.

Table 6

Major Reasons for Attendance Related to High School Decile

High School Decile	Academic (percent)	Financial (percent)	Location (percent)
1st (N = 112)	47	57	77
2nd (N = 160)	51	26	72
3rd (N = 98)	68	16	71
4th (N = 43)	63	23	74

Note.--$X^2 = 31.92$, $p < .001$

Table 7

Major Reasons for Attendance Related to High School Average

High School Average	Academic (percent)	Financial (percent)	Location (percent)
A (N = 50)	54	68	70
B+ (N = 113)	44	46	78
B (N = 154)	52	22	76
B- (N = 118)	63	14	68
C+, C, C- (N = 84)	55	24	69

Note.--$X^2 = 42.08$, $p < .001$.

Table 8

Major Reasons for Attendance Related to Mathematics SAT Scores

Math SAT Scores	Academic (percent)	Financial (percent)	Location (percent)
600 - 799 (N = 147)	40	50	76
500 - 599 (N = 199)	57	28	82
350 - 499 (N = 53)	79	13	68

Note.--$X^2 = 33.14$, $p < .001$.

The index presented in the following table is a weighted average of the number of first, second, third, and fourth mentions of a given college. An index score of 4.0 would indicate that the given institution was named as the first choice by all of the students who named it, while a rank of 1.0 would indicate that the institution was named as the fourth choice by all those who named it.

Table 9

Index Ranks of Colleges Listed by Students Who Did and Did Not Attend Hofstra

Colleges	Attenders		Non-Attenders	
	Index	N	Index	N
Adelphi University	2.5	81	2.8	58
Albany (SUNY)	2.8	17	---	--
Boston University	2.7	11	3.4	16
Brooklyn College	---	--	3.1	11
Buffalo University	2.9	14	---	--
City College--C.C.N.Y.	2.5	14	3.2	12
Cortland College	3.5	6	---	--
C. W. Post College	2.4	89	2.2	23
Fairleigh Dickenson University	2.2	10	---	--
Hofstra University	3.6	527	2.7	277
Hunter College	2.8	12	---	--
Ithaca College	---	--	3.4	7
Long Island University	2.2	18	2.1	16
Nassau Community College	2.1	47	2.0	18
New College at Hofstra University	---	--	2.6	56
New Paltz (SUNY)	3.1	15	2.9	14
New York University	3.2	49	3.2	31
Oneonta College	2.4	12	---	--
Pratt Institute	---	--	3.7	6
Queens College	2.7	65	3.2	53
St. John's University	2.5	39	2.5	36
Stony Brook (SUNY)	2.9	28	3.3	38
Suffolk Community College	1.8	11	---	--
Syracuse University	---	--	3.2	15
University of Bridgeport	2.1	12	2.2	10